

Pavilion Organizer - FINLAND

FINLAND TRADE CENTER, EMBASSY OF FINLAND - MR. MASAHIRO
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Taking a look at the number of Japanese companies visiting us, we feel that FOODEX was very effective. This year, 11 companies exhibited and 4 companies received orders during the FOODEX period.



Q: Please give us a brief introduction of your organization.

We are Finland Trade Center, Finpro Japan. Finpro is the department that brings together all the commercial sectors of Finnish Embassies in the world. Our 3 main activities are Export Finland, Invest in Finland, and Visit Finland. Export Finland supports export promotion of Finnish products to the world. Invest in Finland aims to increase the amount of investment to Finland. For example, we assist Japanese companies who are interested in opening a new office or doing a business acquisition in Finland. Visit Finland helps tourism promotion. Currently, we have a separate office that takes care of tourism related activities.

Q: Tell us more about your activities and promotional events.

We mainly give advices to companies. The Japanese market is very unique and the structure itself is new to many Europeans. Even if the Finnish company is highly skilled and creates a business plan before they come to Japan, it often does not work as they have planned. So we

tell the companies what kind of procedures they need to take, what kind of points to watch out for, and how they should plan their market entry process.

To be more specific, let's say a company wants to know the market size of a certain product or wants to conduct a market research. We have a system called the evaluated partner consultant. This is a system where we look for consulting firms that have the capability of providing support to Finnish companies. Those who become our partner will handle the work and we have different consultant firms that cover all business categories. We are able to provide a reliable consultant even though they charge fees for various types of support. Since we know the culture, characteristics, and product of the Finnish companies, we would tell our partnered consultants all the information they need in advance. In addition to find out appropriate consultant, we can follow up the project from the beginning to end, and give advice to the company together with the Japanese consultant.

If the companies have already started business in Japan, we would help them organize business event by providing them a space in the embassy or help them with meetings and receptions. We charge fees for using embassy space, but depending on the situation, we give a speech or ask the ambassador for the speech if the company wants to attract the media.

In addition to that, Finnish Embassy's twitter account has the most followers out of all the foreign embassies in Japan. Out of all the embassies in the world, we rank 5th. In regards to that, our twitter account is a highly effective promotional tool. If the Finnish companies ask us in advance, we screen the content and product. Since we need to be fair, we cannot tweet anything particular about a certain company or product, but we will retweet the information of the company that has passed our screening process.

Q: Do you conduct promotional events for B2C?

Since it requires great effort and investment, it is difficult to promote food and alcohol in Japan. We try to do what we can do step by step. Recently, the Northern European boom has actually shifted to a Finnish boom. Finland is the most popular tourist destination from Japan out of the Northern European countries for the past 5-6 years. It is especially popular among women in their 20s to 40s. We want to add food promotion as part of tourism so that more people will become familiar with Finnish foods as they learn about the country.

We also did an event at where a Finnish chef and Japanese chef collaborated to make a dish using Finnish products. We made a TV program for this event. It could be good preparation

work for our promotion activities at FOODEX.

Q: How are Finnish companies involved in Foodex?

Although some Finnish companies exhibit without our help, most companies would contact us in advance and we are able to give them some advice, or help to organize Finnish group pavilion at the exhibition. Since customs and other procedures of bringing in food are complicated, we will help the process run more smoothly with the cooperation of the Japanese officials.

There are also cases where Finnish companies are publicly funded. A 3-year program to promote Finnish food as "Food from Finland program" to the world has started last fall. Using this program, we were able to create a pavilion at Foodex and bring many Finnish companies to Japan.

Q: What were the achievements of this year's Foodex?

This year, 11 companies exhibited and 4 companies received orders during the FOODEX period. We used Moomin as an attraction. All the products we have here are samples that were left over from FOODEX. We stock the samples that are still unexpired so that we can hand them to companies who are interested but missed their chance to get a sample at FOODEX. Taking a look at the number of Japanese companies visiting us, we feel that FOODEX was very effective.

Q: What are some difficulties or barriers of importing to Japan?

It is important to check the regulations for additives, understand the unique business customs of Japan, and check the product size. Since food products sold in Japan are small compared to products sold abroad, we always tell them that point.

Q: What are some of the leading products from Finland?

Berries are attracting the most attention in Japan and other countries. In Finland, there are many types of wild berries. Since wild berries are so abundant during the harvest season, it's

difficult not to step on a berry when you go inside the forest. All berries grown in the wild are handpicked, high quality, organic, and recently seen as a type of super food. Finnish berries are gathering attention for its high quality, healthiness, and high supply volume.



Another product is alcohol. We have three types of alcohol here: historic beer, honey beer, and gin based drink. Finnish alcohol is still not familiar in Japan. From this fall, we are planning to put more emphasis on berries and alcohol promotion.



Q: What are the goals of FINPRO?

There are many types of food products from Finland, but we don't have enough branding. What exactly is Finnish food? Many Japanese people cannot answer that question. We want to change that situation. We think that FOODEX is a great opportunity in that sense. Our main goal is to have more Finnish food products used in the Japanese household. Letting more people know how there are so many good foods from Finland through promotional activities is the first thing we have to do.

